My Dearest Wife,

I hope this letter finds you well; I miss you very much. I can only hope that my trip will be short-lived, and I can shortly return to you in China and we can build our life together. My life here has changed a lot since I’ve arrived from China. Our boat ride was awful; the broker only paid for the cheapest ticket on the boat, and we were in steerage. I was crammed in with many other people, and we had awful food, and nowhere to wash ourselves. There were so many sick people on the boat; I was very blessed that I didn’t catch any sickness from them.

When we got to the United States, I thought there would be lots of opportunities for me to make money for our future. I thought there would be unlimited opportunities for me to find the gold it takes for us to live the rest of our life happily. All the American miners already gave up; but one of the men I worked a claim with found some small bits of gold, even after the Americans had thought they’d picked it clean. A lot of Americans were very upset with us for finding this gold. They called us “coolies” which is apparently some sort of derogatory term used for Chinese people. I don’t understand why they hate us so much for helping them with their work; I’ve never done anything bad to anyone but one white man spit on my feet and he walked by. I had always imagined America to be a much kinder place; I didn’t realize so many people hated China. The work in the mines was very tedious, and I got tired doing it, but I know that I am providing for my future family, so I continue to try very hard in all of my work.

I was unhappy to hear that the claim that I had been working on has been given up on; we don’t have the technology to continue, but many of the other immigrants I work with decided to begin working on the railroad instead, so I followed them there. We’re working to build the Central Pacific railroad. The bosses tell us that the railroad will be good for the United States, and that we’re helping to build and make the country greater. I don’t know if what they’re saying is right, but I’m happy to have the work, and it pays. There also, there are many Americans who do not welcome us, and who say that they hate us. I don’t understand where the hate comes from in this country; I can’t wait until I can come back to China.

Everywhere I go, I begin to fear more and more for my life. There are many angry Americans who say that we ‘poison their culture’, and that we take all their jobs. I think that there are many jobs available in this country. The United States is growing so quickly; I think there is enough space for everybody to find good work. I hear everywhere that Chinese people are being attacked and killed; their homes are burned to the ground and they are stolen from. There is so much hatred here; I do not feel accepted by the Americans. The only solace that I have is in being with fellow countrymen who understand my worries and empathize with me.

I don’t know how I feel about America. There are many opportunities for growth and prosperity, but I don’t think that negates the feeling of loneliness and worry that I feel, even amongst other Chinese. I cannot wait for the day where I have enough money to come back and be with you back home. It pains me that you can’t join me here, but there is talk of new laws being passed to stop Chinese from coming over to the United States. I think you’d be happier at home anyways, so don’t fear, I’ll be home soon.

With Much Love,

Your Husband.

Image:



Sources :

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